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DAYTON, Ohio, March 13, 1972 --- For two weekends this month, the University of Dayton Players will present Three Penny Opera in the Boll Theater of the Kennedy Union. This play by Brecht, which was his first successful use of Epic Theater, is based on a play written in 1728 by John Gay, and called The Beggar's Opera. The Beggar's Opera was a satire of the aristocracy, marriage, and the popular Italian style of Opera. The play was peopled with characters from the low life, beggars, thieves and crooks.

It was this satire that Brecht took, modernized to the 19th Century, and turned into a social commentary on an aristocracy which permits an underworld to exist. The play was written in 1928, and brought popularity to the song, "Mack the Knife."

Epic Theater is a concept that has changed the theater of our time, and is based on Brecht's idea that theater should instruct. In Brecht's words, the actor must "Make himself observed standing between the spectator and the text." Thus, when the players sing during the production, they step out of character and comment, in song, on the character, and that of the commentator on the character.

The whole theme of Epic Theater is anti-illusionary, so that when stage props are used for the set, they are plainly visible, with the effect, says director Lawrence Selka, "of seeming like a bare theater, or a lumber yard." The purpose is to not delude the audience into thinking this is anything but a theater and a set.

Professor Selka has been at the University since 1968. Three Penny Opera will be the eleventh production he has directed at the University, and adds to a long string of directorial jobs he has held previously, in high schools and colleges around the state of Ohio. He obtained both his Bachelor's and Masters Degrees at Bowling Green State University. He also received a commission in the United States Air Force, where he served for four years. Of Three Penny Opera, he says, "It should meet the ideas of people who want to see a musical, but it offers something more." He feels that the play is a challenge, and that since Brecht has not been done at the University before, that people should have a chance to see it.

The play will be presented on March 16, 17, 18, 24, and 25, at 8:00 p.m. Ticket information is provided by the University Players at 229-2545. The players will be in costumes taken from several different periods, so there will be hoop skirts, bustles, and outfits from the gay nineties.

The players will be Kenneth Mako, Doug Kastilahn, Paula Killian, Rosemary Loar, Dan O'Connell, Mac Crook, Jim Nicholas, Chuck Caron, Mike Meaders, Celia McLean, B. Dolan, E. Piemeyer, G. Pritchett, L. Bomarito, M. Parr, B. Heeney, H. Schmitz, N. Friend, J. Griffin, D. Burger, C. Cartwright, S. Rupert, V. Wilson, and J. Ferst.

The actors, since there are no big dance productions, have been able to concentrate on the characters and the music so such hits as "Mack the Knife" and other songs from the long-run Off-Broadway show have been given much care in the production.